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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION REPORT - Iraq - Afghanistan U.S. - EU Summit
U.S. Image Abroad North Korea Somalia
PARIS - Wednesday, June 21 2006

(A) SUBJECTS COVERED IN TODAY'S REPORT:

Iraq - Afghanistan
U.S. - EU Summit
U.S. Image Abroad
North Korea
Somalia

B) SUMMARY OF COVERAGE:

Le Monde carries two highly critical op-eds about the U.S.: political analyst Daniel Vernet writes about the "West's Failure in Iraq and Afghanistan" while Sylvie Kauffmann entitles her column: "America Loses the Image War." (See Part C) But Le Monde's front page is more upbeat about U.S. relations with the EU: "The U.S. - EU Summit Under the Sign of Partnership." "The summit will provide the opportunity to verify the renewed transatlantic relationship which followed the diplomatic fracture over Iraq..." Inside, Corines Lenes's article is entitled "Americans and Europeans Seal their Appeased Relations Despite Guantanamo." The article is accompanied by a color photo of three Austrian militant protesters dressed up to look like Guantanamo hooded detainees in their orange jumpsuits. (See Part C)

Le Figaro features Secretary Rice on its front page in connection with her warning to North Korea "not to cross the yellow line." (See Part C)

Several reports confirm Tokyo's decision to withdraw its troops from Iraq. Liberation's report comments: "Washington's requests were sufficient to convince Tokyo to keep its troops in place until the end of President Bush's term... But while this was big news in Japan, it leaves the Americans unmoved, because Japan's presence was more symbolic than anything else..."

Front pages and editorials are overwhelmingly devoted to the latest clash at the National Assembly pitting PM Villepin and Socialist Party leader Hollande over EADS and the insider trading accusations made against EADS's co-president Noel Forgeard, who was appointed by the government. Hollande is questioning Villepin's continuing support of Forgeard. Several UMP deputies have taken their distance from Villepin, while Christine Boutin is asking for his resignation.

La Croix devotes several articles to the situation in Somalia, with one report indicating that "the U.S. may be ready to talk with the Islamic Tribunals" while another story warns about the danger of "the Somali war spreading to the region." (See Part C)

La Croix's question of the day, "Why Is China So Interested in Africa?" is answered by Francios Lafargue, author of a book on the energy war between the U.S. and China: "Africa's mines and oil reserves are necessary to China's industrial development... China's ambitions on the African continent are not political, there are essentially economic... Contrary to India which is developing thanks to its service sector, China's development is industrial..."

(C) SUPPORTING TEXT/BLOCK QUOTES:

Iraq - Afghanistan

"Iraq-Afghanistan: The West's Failure"

Daniel Vernet in left-of-center Le Monde 906/20): "Things are not going better in Iraq. And nothing goes in Afghanistan. The two interventions ... which were to bring stability if not democracy to the Greater Middle East, are facing ferocious opposition... The worsening situation in Afghanistan... is not unrelated to the failures of the U.S. in Iraq... Yet, at the start, the two cases were vastly different... President Bush's 'coalition of the willing' seemed to unite the 'civilized world' against the Mollahs... even if all do not share the same ideology. Some rally the U.S. out of solidarity, others because they are America's clients... Afghanistan might have become a case study in nation building... But this may not come to pass. The Taliban are back... International troops are facing growing mistrust from the local population... NATO could well ruin its reputation in a theatre which stands outside its mission.

The causes are multiple, including Afghanistan's longstanding poverty. But more than in Iraq where President Bush can be held responsible, the Afghan experience leads one to re-assess the principle and the manner of military and political determination."

U.S. - EU Summit

"Americans and Europeans to Seal their Appeasement Despite Guantanamo"

Corine Lesnes in left-of-center Le Monde (06/21): "Yesterday's adversaries are no longer tearing each other apart as they did over Iraq, but finding compromises like the one on a temporary mechanism to provide aid to the Palestinians... The EU Commissioner Manuel Barroso acknowledges that 'relations have been considerably reinforced... We work together to face economic, political and environmental challenges.' Except for Guantanamo, which the Europeans want closed... The climate in Vienna will be somewhat darkened by violation of human rights issues by the U.S. Army in Iraq and the repetition of incidents which the U.S. says are isolated ones, like Abu Ghraib or Haditha."

"EU and U.S. Want to Advertise Their Entente"

Pierre Avril in right-of-center Le Figaro (06/21): "The EU and the U.S. entente will be proven again today in Vienna. It is, as Steven Hadley said, 'an opportunity to reaffirm a strong relationship...' Brussels and Washington can be proud of their united front against Iran... And regarding the promotion of democracy, Brussels is convinced that the European doctrine is now serving as inspiration in the American approach... In this generally harmonious ambiance, the only dark cloud should be Europe's request for Guantanamo's closing, a subject that is causing embarrassment to the Bush administration... The topic is extremely sensitive in European opinions which are graded in their welcome for the U.S. President... three out of four Austrians think 'president Bush is a bad President, who is dangerous for world peace.'"

"Europe Does Not Want Visas to the U.S."

Sebastien Maillard in Catholic La Croix (06/21): "The Austrian Chancellor will be going to bat to ask for a complete exemption of visas to the U.S. In addition to asking for Guantanamo's closing... the question of U.S. visas will be on the agenda of the U.S.-EU summit... The EU wants the U.S. to extend the visa waiver program to all EU members... According to a European diplomat quoted in AFP, the EU could go further than just raising their voices, and ask U.S. diplomats and military personnel to require visas to travel to Europe... The EU must resolve another issue, that of Washington's request for the transfer of passenger data."

"Energy Security and Trade at the Heart of Transatlantic Summit"

Right-of-center Les Echos (06/21): "While the U.S. refused to adhere to the Kyoto Protocol, climate change will also be discussed... Insisting on the convergence of views with the Americans, Europeans are expected to show their disagreement over two political dossiers: Guantanamo and visas... The 25 are asking that the U.S. lift visa requirements that affect 10 countries, members of the Union... Regarding the Doha Round negotiations, George W. Bush has in vain stated that the U.S. is ready to make new sacrifices to unblock the negotiations, but this does not seem to be Congress's opinion. It is unlikely, therefore, that the transatlantic summit will lead to any concrete advances."

"U.S. and Europe Showing Off their Newfound Entente"

Right-of-center La Tribune (06/21): "Three years after the falling out over the second American military expedition in Iraq, (the Europeans) are expected to work to show that this black page has been turned... Four subjects of disagreement will be on the menu, however: Guantanamo, 'rights of people' (i.e. visas), and economic issues such as the limits imposed on foreign investment in some American sectors, and the Doha negotiations."

U.S. Image Abroad

"America Loses the Image War"

Sylvie Kauffmann in left-of-center Le Monde (06/21): "The Bush administration calls it public diplomacy. And the least one can say is that it does not excel in it. Its aim is to improve the image of the U.S. around the world. A priority that emerged after 9/11... One year ago President Bush called on Karen Hughes, a close advisor whose reputation preceded her. But Hughes's efforts, and those of Secretary Rice, who, since she arrived at the State Department has

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been re-orienting America's diplomacy, have changed nothing: America's image continues to plummet, and on the eve of the U.S. - EU summit two recent studies (Pew and the Financial Times) prove this in an alarming demonstration... The U.S. is more dangerous than Iran: this is enough to elicit some thinking in President Bush as he travels on Air Force One towards Vienna, where climate, among other issues will be discussed, and which contributes to tarnishing the U.S. image in the world... The initial comments on the Guantanamo suicides by the camp's commander and a 'specialist' in public diplomacy are openly being criticized in Washington's high circles... Secretary Rice's influence in communications is clearly more positive than Vice President Cheney's or Secretary Rumsfeld's. But America's image problems and its failings in public diplomacy cannot hide the fundamental issue of what to do with Guantanamo. President Bush can be certain that this issue, and any excess in the war on terror, will be raised in every Euro-American diplomatic meeting... As long as the U.S. has not regained its standing on the

international scene regarding the rule of law, as long as its diplomats who travel to Europe continue to say one thing, while the administration does another, the U.S. will continue to look like the number one loser in the battle of ideas against terrorism... President Bush can find consolation in one thing: according to the two studies, Europeans and Americans agree on Iran."

North Korea

"Washington and Tokyo Warn North Korea"

Philippe Gelie in right-of-center Le Figaro (06/21): "Is Kim Jong Il bluffing to get attention away from Iran and back to him? ... A year ago the world expected a nuclear test from North Korea which in the end never came. This time, Pyongyang could well say it is launching a commercial satellite. And if Beijing and Seoul believe the story, it will make it more difficult to have a consensual reaction at the UN."

Somalia

"The U.S. Ready to Talk with Islamic Tribunals"

Francois D'Alencon in Catholic La Croix (06/21): "The talks last week at the Norwegian delegation to the UN between U.S. and the 'Somali contact group' was characterized by observers as an initiative by the State Department to regain a political foothold in Somalia after their apparent fiasco... The U.S. policy of alliance with certain Somali faction leaders had some results, such as the arrest of a suspect allegedly connected to Al-Qaeda... In the framework of the U.S. global war on terror, the U.S. has also stationed troops in Djibouti to lead operations in the Horn of Africa... The relationship between Al-Qaeda and the Islamic Tribunals remains unclear, although not so for the U.S. administration... After the fall of Mogadiscio, the U.S. did not indicate whether it had stopped its support of the Somali warlords... An internal memo from Micahel Zorick, a U.S. political advisor in Kenya in charge of the Somali dossier, criticized America's Somali policy, and earned him a transfer to Chad... As proof that the Americans are intensely committed in the Horn of Africa, CENTCOM's General John Abizaid was seen in Addis Ababa on Monday for talks with the Prime Minister on 'on going efforts to fight against terrorism.'" STAPLETON